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ABSTRACT

A survey was conducted to determine the patient's perception of treatment received from clinicians at the Texas Chiropractic College Clinic in Pasadena, Texas. A questionnaire designed to assess various aspects of the school's clinical and dispensary services was administered to 79 patients who had completed their treatment prescriptions. The average age of the respondents was 40.21 years, and the majority of respondents were female and Caucasian. The results show that the clinic is doing an excellent job and that its services are considered valuable by the patients. Questions relating to the responsibilities and demeanor of faculty and student doctors were rated high by respondents. The location of the clinic received the lowest rating. The dispensary services received a relatively low rating, and it is recommended that the efficiency of the dispensary be examined. Staff received a fairly high rating. Data are summarized in two tables. (KM)

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Texas Chiropractic College Practice Management Education: The Patients Point of View

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Introduction

The process by which private practitioners set up their practices and the enhancement techniques employed to promote competence, credibility and caring are most often learned during their tenure in the professional program. In fact, the clinical methods observed in an educational setting are most often incorporated when the chiropractor begins his practice. What a student observes in school, both in an educational sense and an incidental sense, will impact on his future practice and income.

It is therefore important that institutions employ self-evaluative measures in order to assess their quality of education. One way to conduct the evaluation is to query patients on the various aspects of their treatments. The purpose of this study was to determine the patients' perception of treatment received from clinicians at the Texas Chiropractic College Clinic in Pasadena, Texas. Texas Chiropractic College (TCC) is both an undergraduate and postgraduate school of professional preparation in the practice of chiropractic health care. In 1985, 1600 of the 2058 practicing D.C.s in Texas were T.C.C. graduates. The student doctors complete a practicum in the campus clinic and therefore service actual patients in a professional setting. Office procedures and operations are followed from appointment taking to follow-up on patient welfare. The purpose of this study, therefore, was to examine the effectiveness of that experience as perceived by the people receiving treatment.

Instrumentation and Procedures

The setting for the study was the aforementioned clinical experience and educational format. One hundred patients from Texas Chiropractic College were designated as program assessment respondents. The questionnaire, designed to assess various aspects of the professional school's clinical and dispensary services, has been used in the past (Waigandt, 1985) and found to be valid.

Part I included various demographic questions which allowed researchers to provide a profile of the patients. Questions included: age, sex, race, reason for treatment, and number of previous visits. Part II of the instrument was comprised of ten questions which allowed the respondents to make judgements on a Likert scale relating to location, cost, personnel, treatment, and dispensary (vitamins/support) services. An additional (11th) question allowed respondents to make comments in an open-ended manner. (see Table 1)

Results

Seventy-nine patients who completed their treatment prescriptions during the three month data collection period of the research were directed to respond to the instrument.

Demographic Data

The average age of the subjects in this study was 40.21 (SD = 13.54) years. The youngest patient seen during the study period was 9 years and the oldest was 69. The largest proportion of the patients were females

with 36 out of the 78 who responded being males. With respect to ethnicity, the vast majority of the study group were Caucasians (88.3%) while approximately 10.4% were Hispanic and only 1 subject was Black.

The patients were also asked how many previous visits they had made to TCC and the reason for their visits. The average number of previous visits for our study group were 17.66. The range in visits were from 0 to 50. A couple of patients said that they had made numerous previous visits but did not give a number so they were not calculated into these data. Another 13 patients failed to respond to this question, most likely because they could not remember the exact number and preferred not to guess.

When asked for their reason for seeking chiropractic care, the largest proportion of the study group (40 patients) sought care for back problems. Other causes (in order of response number) were neck troubles (11 patients), headaches (6 patients), hip/leg/knee pain (5 patients), general health maintenance (4 patients), general pain (4 patients), shoulder pain (4 patients), muscle pain (3 patients), chest pain (2 patients), arthritis (2 patients), and numbness (2 patients).

Questionnaire

Table 2 shows the questions and response mode by number, percentage and mean scores when "a" equals four, "b" equals three, "c" equals 2, and "d" equals one. Two of the questions allowed for a "no basis for judgement" response. Respondents who either had no basis for judgement or who did not respond to a particular question were placed in a separate mode and their values were calculated out of further data analysis.

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The grand mean for all questions is 3.58. This indicates that, since the highest possible is 4.00, patients responded very positively to the questions asked. It should be noted that there was considerable variability with regard to the questions in that the lowest mean score is only 3.11 while the highest mean score is 3.74. (see Table 2)

Question 1

Question 1 queried respondents about their perception of their interaction with the staff personnel. Staff personnel are considered support personnel such as phone receptionists, clinic cashiers and appointments personnel. The TCC staff personnel fared well with a mean score of 3.59. This score approximates the grand mean of 3.58 and gives the staff a moderately good grade as compared to responses on the other questions. It should also be noted that less than three percent of the respondents felt that the staff personnel were something less than courteous.

Question 2

The location of the chiropractic clinic was the concern of Question 2. Approximately 45% of the respondents said that the TCC clinic was in a very convenient location. Approximately 23 percent, however, said that the location was something less than convenient. This question received the most negative overall response of all the questions asked with a mean score of 3.11 out of a possible 4.

Upon closer scrutiny of the responses made to question 2 the issue becomes clearer. One patient said that she drove over 120 miles to come

to Texas Chiropractic College clinic while another said she drove 90 miles each week. It is evident that patients who have to spend a large proportion of their day on the road in order to get the care they need, are likely to to be dissatisfied with the campus location.

Question 3

Question 3 referred to the clinicians at TCC. For the purpose of this survey, faculty and student doctors were considered the clinicians being scrutinized. With a mean score of 3.73, the clinicians fell well above the grand mean of 3.58. This indicated a high degree of patient satisfaction with the clinicians. A further analysis revealed that 100 percent of the respondents said that the faculty and student doctors were either courteous or very courteous.

Question 4

Question 4 asked the respondents to rate how professionally the treatment was conducted. The responses for this question were consistent with other responses relating to TCC's clinical personnel (faculty and student doctors). Over 98 percent of the respondents said that their treatment was conducted in a professional or very professional manner. Only one respondent reported dissatisfaction with the manner in which the treatment was conducted.

Question 5

Respondents were asked to compare TCC's treatment with other chiropractic treatments they have had. Approximately 37 percent either

had no basis for judgement because they had never been to another clinic or failed to respond. Of those who did respond 100 percent said that TCC's treatment was as thorough as or more thorough than any they have had. In terms of its rating, the mean score for this question was 3.72. Of particular interest was the 72 percent (36 respondents) who felt that TCC's treatment was more thorough than any they have had.

Question 6

Although the dispensary services were rated relatively low as compared to other elements of TCC's service ($\bar{X}$ = 3.33), over 96 percent of the responses indicated at least adequate service. It should be pointed out that 58 percent (46 patients out of 79) of the respondents did not use the dispensary services (vitamins/support).

Question 7

Approximately 73 percent of the patients who responded to the questionnaire indicated that the cost of the services at the TCC clinic were very reasonable. Another 26 percent indicated that the cost was reasonable. None of the patients said that they believed that the clinic charged too much for its services.

Question 8

Question 8 asked respondents if they intended to return to the Texas Chiropractic College clinic. The mean score for this question was 3.74 (the highest response of all questions asked) and well above the grand

mean of 3.58. This indicated that most patients appeared to be "satisfied customers." A further analysis of these data shows that 100 percent of the patients in this sample intended to return to the TCC clinic.

Question 9

The intent of the ninth question was to reinforce data regarding the value of TCC's clinical services and asked if respondents would recommend the clinic to a friend. Over 98 percent of the respondents said that they would recommend the clinic to their friends. Only one person indicated a negative impression regarding the value of the clinical services at TCC.

Question 10

Question 10 summarized the intent of this survey and asked respondents to give an overall impression of the Texas Chiropractic College clinic. The mean value for this question is 3.68 and above the grand mean. All of the respondents said that with regard to location, cost, personnel, thoroughness of treatments and dispensary services, TCC was either good or excellent.

Question 11

The last question allowed respondents to write additional comments in an open-ended manner. Nineteen (24 percent) of the 79 questionnaires contained an 11th question response. Of the 19, two were non-specific , all positive in nature. Four of the respondents directed their comments toward specific TCC personnel--all were complimentary in nature. Five of

the respondents wrote what should be considered less than positive responses. These responses were directed primarily toward old equipment in need of repair. The remaining eight responses, all positive, described "clean facilities," "caring personnel," "affordable fees," and "good health care" delivery.

Implications and Conclusions

The data reveal some very interesting facts about Texas Chiropractic College's clinical services. It is evident that the TCC clinic is doing an exceptional job and that this job is noted as a valuable service by the patients who utilize it.

There are some trends which appear to run through the data that require some interpretation. Those questions pertaining to the responsibilities of faculty and student doctors appear to be rated very high by the patients. Questions, such as those concerning the demeanor of the clinicians and the thoroughness of the treatments, reflect on the faculty and student doctors and are rated uniformly high by respondents.

The location of TCC clinic was given the lowest rating by the respondents. This is understandable since a significant number of the patients reported having to drive great distances to visit the clinic. One might interpret this in a positive way since it is evident that these patients were willing to drive the distance for what they considered good health care.

The dispensary services, described on the questionnaire as vitamins/support services, were also rated relatively low by those who

responded. The majority of the patients had not had an occasion to utilize these services. The majority of the patients who did use these services, reported them as being adequate/good. If a recommendation were to come out of this study, it would be to increase efficiency in these services.

The staff personnel were rated fairly high (they approximated the grand mean for the data) by the respondents. One of the respondents indicated that the person she talked to "seemed not to know what was going on, but was polite." It must be understood by staff personnel that first impressions are often long-lasting and interaction with staff personnel is most often the patient's introduction to TCC. Nevertheless, approximately 97 percent of the respondents indicated that they felt that TCC's staff personnel were courteous.

Questions which show a measure of strength are those regarding the perceptions of patients toward the TCC clinic. Questions such as "would you return to the clinic?", "would you recommend the clinic to a friend?", and "what is your overall impression of the TCC clinic?" provide insight about the general feelings the public has about the TCC clinic. In general, the TCC clinic is doing a superior job for its patients. One patient's comment reflects a general consensus within the study sample, "In addition to myself, two of my children have also been treated here. We are more than pleased with our physical treatment and plan to return when we need it."

Reference

Waigandt A, Waigandt MG, Taylor M (1985) An Analysis of Patient Services at the University of Houston College of Optometry: A Consumer Perspective. Optometry News, 7(3), July, 33-35.

Table I--Instrument

PATIENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Part I

Age (in years) _____
Sex (please circle) Male Female
Race (please circle) White Black Hispanic Oriental Other:_____
Why are you seeking chiropractic care? _____
Number of previous visits to the Texas Chiropractic Clinic: _____

Part II

Please **circle** the **letter** which **best describes your opinion** about the questions asked.

1. The staff personnel (phone receptionists, cashiers, etc) at the clinic were
   a. very courteous
   b. courteous
   c. somewhat courteous
   d. discourteous

2. The location of the Texas Chiropractic College clinic is
   a. very convenient
   b. convenient
   c. somewhat convenient
   d. inconvenient

3. The clinicians (faculty and student doctors) at the clinic were
   a. very courteous
   b. courteous
   c. somewhat courteous
   d. discourteous

4. In my opinion, the manner in which the treatment was conducted was
   a. very professional
   b. professional
   c. somewhat professional
   d. unprofessional

5. Compared to other chiropractic procedures I have had, the treatment at TCC was
   a. more thorough
   b. as thorough
   c. less thorough
   d. no basis for judgment

6. In my opinion, the dispensary (vitamins/support) services were
   a. outstanding
   b. good/adequate
   c. poor
   d. no basis for judgement

7. I found the cost at Texas Chiropractic College clinic to be
   a. very reasonable
   b. reasonable
   c. high
   d. too high

8. Would you return to the Texas Chiropractic College Clinic?
   a. definitely yes
   b. yes
   c. probably not
   d. definitely not

9. Would you recommend the TCC clinic to a friend?
   a. definitely yes
   b. yes
   c. probably not
   d. definitely not

10. My overall impression of the Texas Chiropractic College clinic is
    a. excellent
    b. good
    c. fair
    d. poor

11. **Additional Comments:** (Please write in the space provided below)

Table 2--Question and Response Mode by Number, Percentage and Mean Scores with A=4, B=3, C=2, D=1.

Question Number	Response Mode a.	b.	c.	d.	Missing Values or no Basis for Judgement	$\bar{X}$	Grand Mean
1.	49 (62%)	28 (35.4%)	2 (2.6%)	0 (0%)	0	3.59	3.58
2.	36 (45.5%)	25 (31.6%)	9 (11.4%)	9 (11.4%)	0	3.11	
3.	57 (73.1%)	21 (26.9%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1	3.73	
4.	41 (53.2%)	35 (45.5%)	1 (1.3%)	0 (0%)	2	3.51	
5.	36 (72%)	14 (28%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	29	3.72	
6.	12 (36.3%)	20 (60.6%)	1 (3.1%)	0 (0%)	46	3.33	
7.	58 (73.4%)	21 (26.6%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0	3.74	
8.	57 (74%)	20 (26%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2	3.74	
9.	44 (67%)	21 (31.8%)	1 (1.2%)	0 (0%)	13	3.67	
10.	45 (68.2%)	21 (31.8%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	13	3.68	

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Table I--Instrument

PATIENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Part I

Age (in years) _____
Sex (please circle) Male Female
Race (please circle) White Black Hispanic Oriental Other:_____
Why are you seeking chiropractic care? _____
Number of previous visits to the Texas Chiropractic Clinic: _____

Part II

Please **circle the letter** which **best** describes **your opinion** about the questions asked.

1. The staff personnel (phone receptionists, cashiers, etc) at the clinic were
   a. very courteous
   b. courteous
   c. somewhat courteous
   d. discourteous

2. The location of the Texas Chiropractic College clinic is
   a. very convenient
   b. convenient
   c. somewhat convenient
   d. inconvenient

3. The clinicians (faculty and student doctors) at the clinic were
   a. very courteous
   b. courteous
   c. somewhat courteous
   d. discourteous

4. In my opinion, the manner in which the treatment was conducted was
   a. very professional
   b. professional
   c. somewhat professional
   d. unprofessional

5. Compared to other chiropractic procedures I have had, the treatment at TCC was
   a. more thorough
   b. as thorough
   c. less thorough
   d. no basis for judgment

6. In my opinion, the dispensary (vitamins/support) services were
   a. outstanding
   b. good/adequate
   c. poor
   d. no basis for judgement

7. I found the cost at Texas Chiropractic College clinic to be
   a. very reasonable
   b. reasonable
   c. high
   d. too high

8. Would you return to the Texas Chiropractic College Clinic?
   a. definitely yes
   b. yes
   c. probably not
   d. definitely not

9. Would you recommend the TCC clinic to a friend?
   a. definitely yes
   b. yes
   c. probably not
   d. definitely not

10. My overall impression of the Texas Chiropractic College clinic is
    a. excellent
    b. good
    c. fair
    d. poor

11. **Additional Comments:** (Please write in the space provided below)